

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 145086
ORIGIN NEA-10

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 145086

STADIS/////////////////////////////////
FOR CHARGE FROM DRAPER, NEA/ARN

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, SY, US

SUBJECT: SYRIAN JEWRY: FORTHCOMING VISITORS TO SYRIA

1. STEVE SHALOM, PLUS EVELYN PETERS AND SHERWOOD SLATER OF THE "JOINT COMMITTEE", SUBMITTED VISA APPLICATIONS THIS WEEK TO SYRIAN EMBASSY WITH REQUEST THAT THEY BE GRANTED BY FRIDAY, JUNE 24 (SINCE SHALOM WISHES TO VISIT ISRAEL AND CERTAIN OTHER COUNTRIES BEFORE PROCEEDING TO SYRIA, WITH SEPARATE PASSPORT, OF COURSE). SYRIAN EMBASSY RETURNED APPLICATIONS WITH EXPLANATION THAT THERE WOULD BE NO TIME. EMBASSY CLERK SUGGESTED THEY GET VISAS AT DAMASCUS AIRPORT OR AT LEBANESE-SYRIAN BORDER.

2. I TELEPHONED AMBASSADOR KABBANI AND FOUND HIM AT THE
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PAGE 02 STATE 145086

LOW POINT OF ONE OF HIS DEPRESSION CYCLES. HE FEELS THE ENTIRE U.S. PEACE EFFORT IS IN DANGER OF COLLAPSING; AND HE IS EXAGGERATING NATURE OF CERTAIN DOMESTIC POLITICAL EXCHANGES ON U.S. POLICY. HE ALLEGED THAT SOLARZ HAD BEEN SAYING SOME HARSH THINGS ABOUT SYRIA RECENTLY (WHICH HE HAS NOT, AS FAR AS I HAVE BEEN ABLE TO DETERMINE FROM HIS STAFF). ALSO, KABBANI ALLEGED THAT A RECENT 30-MAN GROUP,

THE AMERICAN PROFESSORS FOR PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST, HAD VISITED SYRIA RECENTLY AND HAD LEFT AN EXTREMELY BAD IMPRESSION. KABBANI IMPLIED THAT HE HAD GONE OUT ON A

LIMB IN APPROVING VISAS FOR CERTAIN VISITORS RECENTLY AND HAD RECEIVED COMPLAINTS FROM DAMASCUS.

3. AFTER EXPLAINING THAT SHALOM HAD SINGLE-HANDEDLY DONE A GREAT DEAL TO CORRECT SYRIA'S IMAGE WITH BROOKLYN'S JEWISH COMMUNITY, KABBANI AGREED TO TELEX DAMASCUS TO OBTAIN APPROVAL FOR A VISA. I ASSURED KABBANI THAT SHALOM HAD INFORMED SECURITY AUTHORITIES (PROBABLY COL. MAKLOUF OR MAS'UD) THAT HE WOULD BE RETURNING TO SYRIA AT ABOUT THIS TIME; KABBANI THEREFORE MAY TELEX MAKLOUF DIRECTLY.

4. IF MATTERS CONTINUE TO GO AWRY, DO YOU BELIEVE YOU COULD ARRANGE AIRPORT VISA FOR SHALOM, ARRIVING JULY 7 FROM ATHENS? APPARENTLY HIAS REP IN GENEVA HAD NO TROUBLE IN SECURING VISA AND LEWAN OF SOLARZ'S STAFF ALREADY HAS HIS. ALL PRESUMABLY WOULD BE TRAVELING ON SAME FLIGHT WITH SHALOM. IF YOU BELIEVE TRYING TO GET AIRPORT VISAS FOR "JOINT COMMITTEE" REPS PETERS AND SLATER WOULD BE LOADING THE PLATE TOO MUCH, I MAY BE ABLE TO TURN THEM OFF, BUT A FAILURE TO LET SHALOM VISIT SYRIA ON THIS OCCASION WILL BE A NEGATIVE DEVELOPMENT AND POSSIBLY CAUSE DAMAGE TO SYRIA'S IMAGE IN MANY QUARTERS. CHRISTOPHER
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PAGE 03 STATE 145086

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